

AMBASSADOR FEINSTEIN'S REMARKS
AVIATION DETACHMENT MOU SIGNING CEREMONY
JUNE 13, 2011

Thank you very much, Minister Klich. It is a genuine pleasure to sign this Memorandum of Understanding today that means so much to our two countries. As President Obama said during his visit to Warsaw three weeks ago, Poland is a great friend and ally of the United States, a steadfast defender of freedom and democracy, and a strong leader on security issues within NATO and the EU.

This agreement makes good on the commitment undertaken by President Obama and President Komorowski when they agreed in principle on the Aviation Detachment in Washington in December 2010. The MOU will facilitate the establishment of a USAF aviation detachment in Poland on an enduring, full-time basis, and fulfills our commitments under the 2008 Declaration on Strategic Cooperation.

This Detachment of personnel will support rotations four times a year of aircraft like U.S. F-16s or C-130s to Poland for approximately two weeks. Aircrew and support personnel will accompany the aircraft during the aircraft rotations, increasing the U.S. presence during those periods.

The Aviation Detachment MOU is the latest in a series of agreements that the U.S. and Poland have signed in the past two years. These include a Protocol amending the Ballistic Missile Defense Agreement, the MOU establishing Special Forces cooperation and, most fundamentally, the agreement that permits the stationing of U.S. forces in Poland: the supplemental Status of Forces Agreement. The Aviation Detachment MOU is clear evidence that the U.S.-Poland security relationship has never been stronger.

Today's MOU contributes to, and builds on, regional cooperation. Once the United States and Poland begin joint training exercises, other partner and Allied countries will want to take part. The agreement itself was made possible by a growing Alliance consensus on security issues, as reflected in NATO's revised Strategic Concept. The revised Strategic Concept reaffirms the Article V commitment to collective defense, which the Detachment will reinforce.

This MOU comes on the heels of a decision by the United States to retain three Brigade Combat Teams in Europe after 2015. The three Brigade Combat Teams as well as other capabilities such as this new Aviation Detachment will allow the United States to fulfill its commitments to

NATO, to engage effectively with allies and partners, and to meet the broad range of 21st century challenges.

The decision to focus on bilateral air force cooperation through the Aviation Detachment was made easier by Poland's impressive modernization efforts. Poland is training pilots to fly its 48 F-16s, some of the most advanced fighter aircraft in Europe and a workhorse for Operation Unified Protector Operations over Libya. Polish F-16s are a key airpower asset in the region, and the U.S. aircraft rotations will improve interoperability between our air forces. Polish C-130s also provide the key airlift capacity that will allow Polish forces to operate when and where they need to be employed.

The U.S. Aviation Detachment, along with the strength of Polish airpower, together provide a key step in establishing Poland as a hub for regional training and operations moving into the future. This MOU will start that process, and I once again thank the Defense Minister for signing it with me today.

Thank you.